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271326Z Dec 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 008654

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iraq Galileo
PARIS - Tuesday, December 27, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iraq
Galileo

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

A hotchpotch of domestic social and economic news makes up today's front pages and editorial commentaries. The launching of Galileo, "a rival of the American GPS" makes the front page in La Tribune, while the editorial predicts a "joint European effort and success" once national political interests are set aside. (See Part C) France Soir devotes its lead to France's image as seen through the eyes of foreign tourists, especially after last month's suburban violence. The report quotes tourists as saying "The French are too arrogant" and "they speak poor English." Catholic La Croix devotes its lead to parliamentary investigations in France and how they function. In connection with the lead story, Catherine Rebuffel reports on the Congressional investigation on 9/11 and more generally she comments: "These investigations are an amazing weapon against the President." She concludes: "On certain sensitive subjects, such as the conditions of detention in Guantanamo, human rights proponents have yet to obtain the creation of a Congressional investigation, something they have been asking for the past year."

Iraq and the legislative elections are a major story in Le Figaro, which also reports on Ayatollah Sistani's "call for wisdom to avert a civil war." (See Part C) La Croix interviews European coordinator on counter terrorism, Gijs de Vries: "The Iraqi conflict has complicated the fight against terrorism because it is enticing European youth to undertake 'jihad.' But all nations are threatened with terrorism, not only those participating in the war in Iraq. The concern in Europe is that these young Europeans can be a threat once they return to their individual countries. Europeans are cooperating through their police forces. There is also a widespread cooperation with the U.S. . On the CIA controversy, it is the Counsel of Europe, not the EU, which is leading the investigation. Secretary Rice during her visit emphasized that the U.S. was

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bound by the UN Charter against torture. This is important in order to convince all those who are fighting against radicalism. The balance between freedom and security would be broken if one government ever accepted torture, which in my view illegal, amoral and politically counter-productive."

La Croix profiles Donald Rumsfeld as "an impatient hawk." (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq

"Towards a Government of National Unity"
Right-of-center Le Figaro (12/27): "Overcome by the violence of daily attacks, Iraq is now in the grips of a political battle. A number of demonstrations have been organized throughout Iraq to protest the results of the legislative elections. In order to avert a confrontation, the solution of a national unity government seems to be taking shape. Hence the talks between the different political groups initiated by President Talabani. The idea gained momentum on Sunday during a meeting between Kurdish leaders attended by the U.S. Ambassador Khalizad. Among those who are contesting the results, the Sunni leader Saleh Motlak is also open to negotiations. The religious Shiite movement led by Ayatollah Sistani is also favorable to a coalition government open to other groups. On the U.S. side, former Secretary of State Powell said he feared the election results may 'accentuate the friction. The Shiite majority is more fundamentalist than we thought.'"

"Rumsfeld, an Impatient Hawk"

Jean-Christophe Ploquin in Catholic La Croix (12/27): "On Saturday, Secretary Rumsfeld harbored the white coat and hat of a Chef as he shared Christmas dinner with U.S. soldiers in Iraq. The evening before he announced that the number of GIs stationed in Iraq would be reduced by spring. Rumsfeld, one of the hawks who convinced the President to go to war in Iraq, would have preferred to state a higher number of soldiers would be able to return home. The U.S. is eager to drastically reduce its military presence in Iraq by next July. It would like to keep the war from weighing in too much on the mid-term elections. But the situation on the ground is dictating the numbers needed on the ground. While in Kabul, Secretary Rumsfeld waved aside speculation on his future. For weeks now Washington has been abuzz with rumor about his departure from the Pentagon. The rumors are tied to the controversy about the use of torture, which has been raging in the U.S. in the framework of the war against terror. Last year, Secretary Rumsfeld had to acknowledge his 'responsibility' in the cases of abuse by Military personnel in the prison of Abu Gharaib."

Galileo

"A Messenger From the Stars"

Francois-Xavier Pietri in centrist La Tribune (12/27): "Galileo, the famous 'European GPS' will be taking flight tomorrow. The stakes for Europe are twofold. First, commercial: because the system has very concrete applications, such as the on-board systems used in automobiles. Second, strategic: It was during their involvement in the Gulf war that the Europeans realized how dependent they were on the U.S. system and to what extent this could be detrimental to them. While Galileo is conceived for civilian applications, its military extension is easy to imagine. It is easy then to understand why Europe decided it was in its interest to develop such a project. This is also why Europe is envied. This project proves how the pooling of energies within the Union, when nationalistic political interests are set aside, can be productive for the Old Continent in its entirety."

STAPLETON